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Written testimony in favor of Bill 10, before the Honolulu City Council on February 14, 2012.

Campaign for Recycling (C4R), a national nonprofit environmental advocacy and research organization that advocates for waste reduction and recycling laws, supports Bill 10, which regulates the use of nonbiodegradable plastic bags and other certain bags provided to customers.

Recycling is not a solution for plastic bag litter

C4R has worked with retailers, bag manufacturers and local and state governments in an effort to try to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling. However, even in California which has established the largest collection infrastructure for any single material in the state, efforts to manage single-use plastic bags through recycling have failed. The CA statewide recycling rate in 2009 was a mere 3%. Furthermore, the small percentage that is recycled anywhere is cost-prohibitive, because the market price for bales of plastic bags is substantially offset by the logistical costs of collecting, transporting, and handling the bags for baling and recycling.

Plastic bags harm the environment

Single-use plastic bags are a costly, environmentally damaging, and easily preventable source of litter and pollution. Light and aerodynamic, plastic bags are uniquely litter-prone even when properly disposed of, and pose a serious threat to the marine environment. When they are no longer visible to the naked eye, plastic bags are still not fully gone but instead have broken down through photo-degradation into tiny particles. These particles then attract surrounding toxins and, when mistaken as a food source, contaminate the food chain. Plastic pollution has killed thousands of marine birds, sea turtles and other species and threatens Hawaii's ocean-based economy. Plastic bags are also easily transported into the environment to clog storm drains, litter beaches, and in general become a visual blight, resulting in costly cleanup efforts.

Safe alternatives to single-use bags

Recent claims about the safety of reusable bags, the environmentally superior alternative to single-use bags, are misleading. There may be some amount of lead in the dyes used in some bags (and clothes and dishware) made in China, but many popular and convenient reusable bags have been certified to be lead free and other hazardous materials. Furthermore, there is zero evidence that reusable bags contain anything close to dangerous levels of bacteria, or that the e.coli strains found during a recent industry-funded study are in fact dangerous.

Banning single-use plastic bags is widely considered an appropriate and practical action that can protect our environment and save financial resources. Other counties in Hawaii have already taken this step, and Honolulu needs to catch up. **We urge your support of this bill.**

MISC. COM. 298 COUNCIL